



A field survey on the genus *Xenophrys* (Amphibia, Megophryidae) confirms underestimated diversity in the Gaoligong Mountains, with the description of a new species

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Abstract

The Gaoligong Mountains, located in the western part of China's Yunnan Province adjoining northern Myanmar, harbor a striking diversity of species and endemism. Previous studies have shown that amphibian diversity in this region remains underestimated. A field survey carried out in 2023 oversaw a collection of eight *Xenophrys* specimens from the Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Yunnan Province, China. Subsequent molecular analyses revealed two distinct and previously undescribed lineages. Based on morphological evidence, we formally describe one of the lineages as a new species and tentatively assign the other lineage to *X*. sp. due to the absence of adult specimens for examination. Our results bring the total number of *Xenophrys* species to 29 and the number of *Xenophrys* species known to occur in China to 11. Furthermore, our study reveals that five species and putative species of *Xenophrys* (*X. dehongensis*, *X. glandulosa*, *X. periosa*, *X. yingjiangensis* sp. nov., and *X.* sp.) exhibit sympatric distribution. These findings highlight the need for future research to investigate the mechanisms of sympatric coexistence in *Xenophrys*. In addition, our study confirms that the amphibian diversity of the Gaoligong Mountains is undoubtedly underestimated. As a result, continued exploration of amphibians in the future is necessary to obtain a clearer understanding of the overall biodiversity in this region.

Key Words

Biodiversity, cryptic species, frog, sympatric distribution, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov.

Introduction

The Asian horned toads of the subfamily Megophryinae (Bonaparte, 1850) are widely distributed in tropical Asia, from India and Bhutan to China and south to the Sundas and the Philippines (Frost 2024). It currently includes 136 recognized species, with more than half of the species

described in the last 10 years (Frost 2024). As a consequence of both morphological similarity among species and the complex patterns of genetic divergence, the generic classification of the subfamily Megophryinae has been constantly under debate (e.g., Delorme et al. 2006; Fei et al. 2009; Chen et al. 2017; Mahony et al. 2017; Lyu et al. 2023). In this study, we followed the classification

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system outlined in Frost (2024) and Lyu et al. (2023), in which Megophryidae was divided into 10 genera for the convenience of our comparisons.

The genus *Xenophrys* Günther, 1864, of the subfamily Megophryinae is distributed widely throughout southern China to the Indochina Peninsula and currently includes 28 recognized species (Frost 2024). These species inhabit primarily montane forests. To date, 10 species have been recorded in China (Frost 2024), with nearly half of the recognized species described in the last 10 years (e.g., Mahony et al. 2018; Lyu et al. 2023; Shu et al. 2023). Moreover, five species of *Xenophrys* have been recorded in Yunnan (AmphibiaChina 2024; Frost 2024).

The Gaoligong Mountains, located in the western part of China's Yunnan Province bordering northern Myanmar, form a long, narrow mountain range. It stretches 600 km from the Tibetan Plateau to Myanmar across a 5° latitude with a large elevation range of 210 m to 5000 m. Renowned as one of the world's most significant biodiversity hotspots outside of the tropics, its complex geography, hydrology, and climate have fostered many distinct habitat types that support diverse biotic components (Chaplin 2005). Several cryptic and novel amphibian species have been described from this mountain ecosystem in recent years (AmphibiaChina 2024), indicating that amphibian diversity in the region may still be diverse and largely underestimated.

A recent herpetological survey conducted at the Gaoligong Mountains, Yunnan Province, China, saw a collection of some *Xenophrys* specimens. Subsequent studies, including molecular data and morphological comparisons, revealed that these specimens represent five distinct evolutionary lineages, two of which could not be assigned to any known *Xenophrys* species. Therefore, we herein describe one of the two lineages as a new species.

Materials and methods

Sampling

Field surveys were conducted in August 2023. A total of eight *Xenophrys* specimens were collected in Tongbiguan Town, Yingjiang County, Yunnan, China (Fig. 1). After taking photographs, the toads were euthanized using benzocaine. Liver tissue was taken from the specimens and preserved in 95% ethanol at -80 °C. The specimens were then fixed in 10% formalin and subsequently stored in 75% ethanol after 24 hours. All the newly collected specimens were deposited in the herpetological collection of the Museum of the Kunming Institute of Zoology (KIZ), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

Molecular data and phylogenetic analyses

Total genomic DNA was extracted using the standard phenol-chloroform extraction protocol (Sambrook et al. 1989). The mitochondrial fragment 16S ribosomal RNA gene (16S rRNA) was amplified and sequenced using the primer pairs (5'-3') 16SAR (CGCCTGTTTAYCAAAAACAT) and 16SBR (CCGGTYTGAACTCAGATCAYGT) (Kocher et al. 1989). The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was performed in a 25 µl volume reaction with the following conditions: an initial denaturing step at 94 °C for 4 min; 35 cycles of denaturing at 94 °C for 40 s; annealing at 55 °C for 40 s; and extending at 72 °C for 1 min; and a final extending step of 72 °C for 10 min. PCR products were sequenced using the same forward and reverse primers as those used in PCR. Sequencing was conducted using an ABI 3730xl DNA automated sequencer (Applied Biosystems, UK). All sequences were assembled from forward and reverse reads

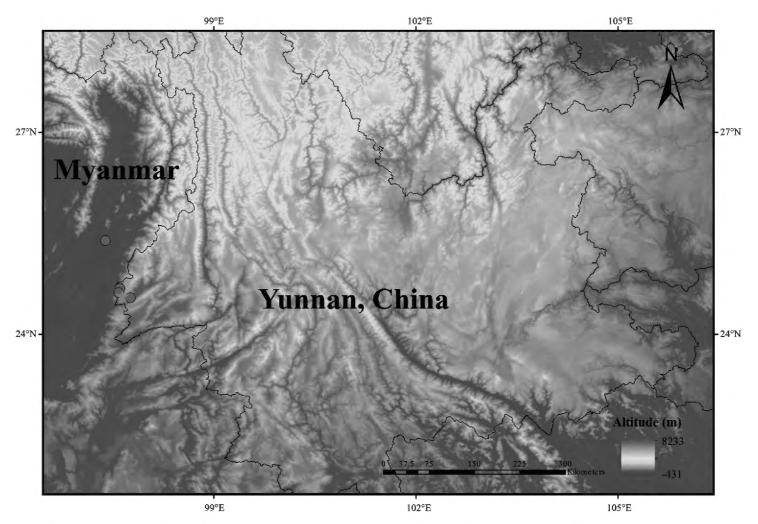


Figure 1. Known distribution of *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov. The red pentagram indicates the type locality of *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov.

and edited manually using DNASTAR LASERGENE 7.1. New sequences were deposited in GenBank (Table 1).

Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) were used to infer phylogenetic trees. Fifty-eight homologous sequences of *Xenophrys* and representative outgroups (*Brachytarsophrys feae*, *Leptobrachella ventripunctata*, and *Leptobrachium huashen*) were downloaded from the GenBank (Table 1). The dataset was aligned using MUS-CLE v3.8 (Edgar 2004), checked by eye, and trimmed to minimize missing characters in MEGA v6.0.6 (Tamura et al. 2013). BI and ML analyses were performed on the CIP-RES web server (Miller et al. 2010) using MrBayes v3.2.4 (Ronquist et al. 2012). For BI analyses, the best-fit model of evolution was determined using the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Posada 2008) implemented in jModelTest

2.1.7 (Darriba et al. 2012). GTR+G was the best-fit model of evolution for 16S rRNA. The Monte Carlo Markov chain length was run for 10 million generations and sampled every 1000 generations, with a burn-in of 25%. Convergence was assessed by the average standard deviation of split frequencies (below 0.01) and ESS values (greater than or equal to 200) in TRACER 1.6 (Rambaut et al. 2014). ML analyses were performed using RAxML-HPC BlackBox 8.2.10 (Stamatakis 2014) with 1,000 bootstrap replicates and using the standard bootstrap search (random seed value 12,345) under the GTR+gamma nucleotide substitution model. Mean genetic distances between and within species were calculated using uncorrected pairwise distances (*p*-distance) by 16S rRNA implemented in MEGA v6.0.6, with complete deletion of missing data and gaps (Tamura et al. 2013).

Table 1. Localities, voucher information, and Genbank accession numbers for all specimens used in this study.

| Species | Voucher | Locality | Accession No. | Reference | |
|--|----------------------------|---|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Xenophrys ancrae | SDBDU 2009.727 | India, Arunachal, Changlang | KY022318 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys ancrae | ZSI A 11606 | India, Arunachal, Changlang | MN734391 | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys auralensis | NCSM 79599 | Cambodia, Kampong Speu, Aural | KX811807 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys awuh | SDBDU 2007.192 | India, Nagaland state, Kohima district, above New Ministers' Hill, Aradurah Forest | MN734399 | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys awuh | MZUHC 314 | India, Mizoram | MT793046 | Lalronunga et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys dehongensis | SYS a005823 | China, Yunnan, Yingjiang | OQ180993 | Lyu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys dehongensis | KIZ 053847 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan | PP989323 | This study | |
| Xenophrys dzukou | SDBDU 2007.106 | India, Nagaland, Kohima | KY022324 | Mahony et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys flavipunctata | SDBDU 2009.298 | India, East Khasi Hills district, Meghalaya | MH647517 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys flavipunctata | SDBDU 2007.134 | India, Kohima district, Nagaland | MH647518 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys glandulosa | KIZ 013609 | China, Yunnan, Wenlong | KX811761 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys glandulosa | SYS a003757 | China, Yunnan, Mt Gaoligong | MH406754 | Liu et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys glandulosa | KIZ 053845 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan | PP989322 | This study | |
| Xenophrys himalayana | SDBDU 2009.1227 | India, West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh | MH647526 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys himalayana | SDBDU 2009.1206 | | MH647527 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys lancangica | SYS a007794 | China, Yunnan, Simao | 00180994 | Lyu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys lancangica | SYS a007825 | China, Yunnan, Jinghong | 00180997 | Lyu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys lekaguli | FMNH 265955 | Thailand, Sa Kaeo, Mueang Sa Kaeo | KY022214 | Mahony et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys major | RGK 0089 | India, Manipur, Tamenglong | KY022308 | Mahony et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys major | SDBDU 2007.229 | India, Nagaland, Kohima | MH647514 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys mangshanensis | KIZ 021786 | China, Guangdong, Mt Nanling | KX811790 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys mangshanensis | SYS a002177 | China, Guangdong, Huaiji | MH406666 | Liu et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys maosonensis | KIZ 016045 | China, Yunnan, Xichou | KX811780 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys maosonensis | SYS a008748 | China, Guangxi, Mt Shiwandashan | OQ181000 | Lyu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys maosonensis | SYS a008766 | China, Guangxi, Mt Shiwandashan | 00181002 | Lyu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys medogensis | KIZ 06657 | China, Xizang, Beibeng | KX811768 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys medogensis | SYS a002932 | China, Xizang, Medog | MH406725 | Liu et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys megacephala | ZSI A 11213 | India, Meghalaya, Ri Bhoi | KY022315 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys montana | SDBDU 2011.1047 | | KY022312 | Mahony et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys montana | SDBDU 2011.1049 | | MH647506 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys montana Xenophrys numhbumaeng | SDBDU 2007.041 | India, West Bengar, Barjeening | KY022316 | Mahony et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys numhbumaeng Xenophrys numhbumaeng | BNHS 6076 | India, Manipur, Tamenglong | MN734393 | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys oreocrypta | SDBDU 2008.1400 | | MH647520 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys oreocrypta Xenophrys oreocrypta | SDBDU 2009.1108 | | MH647521 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys oropedion | ZSI A 11601 | India, Meghalaya state, East Khasi Hills district, Shillong, Malki Forest | | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys oropedion | ZSI A 11601 ZSI A 11603 | India, Meghalaya state, East Khasi Hills district, Shillong, Malki Forest | | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| • | YBU 21248 | | OR026569 | Shu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys pangdaensis | | China, Xizang, Yadong County, Pangda Village | OR026572 | | |
| Xenophrys pangdaensis | YBU 21261 | China, Xizang, Yadong County, Pangda Village | | Shu et al. 2023 | |
| Xenophrys periosa | SDBDU 2009.793 | India, East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh | MH647522 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys periosa | SDBDU 2009.1285 | | MH647524 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys periosa | CIB YN201909160 | | MT225581 | Shi et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys periosa | KIZ 053849 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan | PP989324 | This study | |
| Xenophrys robusta | K5207/ZSI11404 | India, Sikkim, North Sikkim | KX894674 | Deuti et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys robusta | SDBDU 2011.1057 | | KY022314 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys serchhipii | SDBDU 2009.612 | India, Tripura, North Tripura | KY022323 | Mahony et al. 2018 | |
| Xenophrys serchhipii | SDBDU 2008.1492 | India, Manipur, Tamenglong | MN734405 | Mahony et al. 2020 | |
| Xenophrys "sp.17" | KIZ 011940 | Myanmar, Myitkyina | KX811792 | Chen et al. 2017 | |
| Xenophrys "sp.17" | KIZ 048503 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | KX811793 | Chen et al. 2017 | |

| Species | Voucher | Locality | Accession No. | Reference |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------|--------------------|
| Xenophrys "sp.17" | KIZ 048504 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | KX811794 | Chen et al. 2017 |
| Xenophrys "sp.17" | KIZ 048505 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | KX811795 | Chen et al. 2017 |
| Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. | KIZ 053814 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | PP989318 | This study |
| Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. | KIZ 053815 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | PP989320 | This study |
| Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. | KIZ 053828 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | PP989319 | This study |
| Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. | KIZ 053848 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | PP989317 | This study |
| Xenophrys sp. | KIZ 053846 | China, Yunnan, Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve | PP989321 | This study |
| Xenophrys takensis | FMNH 261711 | Thailand, Kampaeng, Khlong Lan | KY022215 | Mahony et al. 2017 |
| Xenophrys truongsonensis | IEBRA 4943 | Vietnam, Dak Lak | ON146200 | Luong et al. 2022 |
| Xenophrys truongsonensis | IEBRA 4948 | Vietnam, Lam Dong | ON146201 | Luong et al. 2022 |
| Xenophrys truongsonensis | IEBRA 4952 | Vietnam, Ninh Thuan | ON146202 | Luong et al. 2022 |
| Xenophrys zhangi | KIZ 014278 | China, Xizang, Nyalam | KX811765 | Chen et al. 2017 |
| Xenophrys zhangi | SYS a008204 | China, Xizang, Nyalam | OQ180998 | Lyu et al. 2023 |
| Xenophrys zunhebotoensis | RGK41 | India, Nagaland, Zunheboto | KY022322 | Mahony et al. 2017 |
| Xenophrys zunhebotoensis | SDBDU 2009.374 | India, Nagaland, Kohima | MN734418 | Mahony et al. 2020 |
| Outgroups | | | | |
| Brachytarsophrys feae | KIZ YN070570 | China, Yunnan, Longchuan | KX811809 | Chen et al. 2017 |
| Leptobrachella ventripunctata | KIZ 046940 | China, Yunnan, Wenlong | KX811929 | Chen et al. 2017 |
| Leptobrachium huashen | KIZ 049025 | China, Yunnan, Mengyang | KX811931 | Chen et al. 2017 |

Morphology and morphometrics

All the measurements were recorded with digital calipers to the nearest 0.1 mm. Morphological terminology followed Fei et al. (2009). Twenty-five measurements included the following: SVL: snout-vent length (measured from tip of snout to vent); **HDL**: head length (measured from tip of snout to rear of jaw); **HDW**: maximum head width (measured width of head at its widest point); **SNT**: snout length (measured from tip of snout to anterior corner of ocular aperture); **ED**: eye diameter (diameter of exposed portion of eyeball); **UEW**: width of upper eyelid (maximum width of upper eyelid); **TD**: tympanum diameter (measured as maximal diameter of tympanum); **DNE**: distance from nostril to eye (distance from the front of the eye to the center of the nostril); SN: distance from the center of the nostril to the tip of the snout; **IND**: internarial distance (distance between nares); **TEY**: distance from anterior edge of tympanum to posterior corner of eye; **IOD**: interorbital distance (measured at narrowest point between eyes on top of the head); FAL: forearm length (measured from the elbow to the wrist); **LAD**: (diameter of lower arm); **FHL**: forearm and hand length (distance from elbow to the tip of the third finger); TL: tibia length (distance from knee to heel); **HL**: hand length (distance from the posterior end of the inner metacarpal tubercle to tip of third finger); HLL: hindlimb length; FL: foot length (distance from the proximal end of inner metatarsal tubercle to the tip of fourth toe); THL: thigh length (from the cloaca to the knee); TAL: tarsus length (measured as the distance from knee to heel); **FLI-IV**: first to fourth finger length.

Results

The aligned sequence matrix of the 16S gene contained 490 bp, among which 215 sites were variable and 159 were parsimony-informative (including outgroups). Both BI and ML trees had almost identical topologies with relatively robust

support for most nodes, differing mainly at terminal nodes identified as weakly supported or collapsed. The genus *Xenophrys* was recovered as monophyletic with strong support from both analyses (BPP=1; BS=96; Fig. 2). The newly collected sympatric samples from Tongbiguan Nature Reserve, Yunnan, China, were divided into five highly divergent clades with strong nodal supports: three were nested within a clade containing recognized species, while the other two formed their own previously unknown lineages (Fig. 2).

The newly collected specimen (KIZ 053849) and *X. periosa* (including the type specimens) nested into a single clade with strong support (BPP=1; BS=81; clade A), and the within-group mean genetic *p*-distance was 1.7% (0%–3.4%, Suppl. material 1). The newly collected specimen (KIZ 053845) strongly clustered with *X. glandulosa* (BPP=1; BS=100; clade B), with maximal uncorrected pairwise 16S distances of merely 0.0%. The newly collected specimen (KIZ 053847) formed a monophyletic clade with *X. dehongensis* from the paratype (BPP=1; BS=99; clade E), with shallow within-group genetic differentiation (0.7%, Suppl. material 1).

For the two new distinct clades, the newly collected samples and samples proposed as *Megophrys* sp. 17 in Chen et al. (2017) clustered into a monophyletic clade with a strong nodal support (BPP=1; BS=99; clade D). This clade was recovered as a sister taxon to X. dehongensis. In addition, the remaining sample (KIZ 053846) formed an independent monophyletic clade, which clustered with X. awuh, X. zunhebotoensis, X. serchhipii, X. numhbumaeng, X. oropedion, X. ancrae, X. megacephala, and X. dzukou with moderate support (BPP=0.96; BS=81; clade C). The two putative new species showed obvious genetic divergence from the other congeners. The genetic distance between the new populations and the other congeneric species ranged from 5.3% (with X. megacephala) to 12.0% (with X. lancangica) for clade D, 7.1% (with X. ancrae), and 12.2% (with X. robusta) for clade C (Suppl. material 1). It is comparable to the divergences among the nearest neighbor genetic distances of the described Xenophrys species, which ranged from 2.1% (*X. mangshanensis* and *X. maosonensis*) to 15.7% (X. dzukou and R. awuh). In addition, these levels

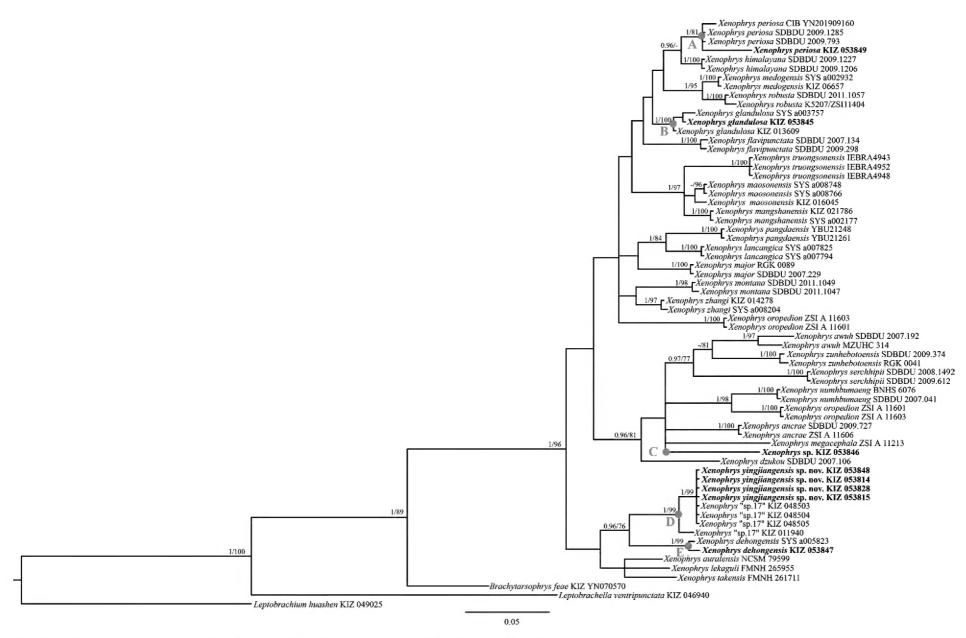


Figure 2. Phylogram of *Xenophrys* based on the mitochondrial 16S rRNA gene. Node values with Bayesian posterior probabilities (BPP) < 0.95 and Bootstrap support (BS) < 70 are not shown. A "-" denotes Bayesian posterior probabilities (BPP) < 0.95 and bootstrap support (BS) < 70. New samples for the present study are indicated in bold font.

of pairwise divergence of the 16S rRNA gene exceeded the acceptable threshold (3%) of species-level genetic divergence in anurans (Vences et al. 2005).

Morphologically, these specimens from Clade D differed from recognized congeners; therefore, we formally describe them as new. However, Clade C contains only one subadult specimen, and further surveys are needed to retrieve adult specimens.

Taxonomic account

Xenophrys yingjiangensis **Wu, Yu, Chen & Che, sp. nov.** https://zoobank.org/C2E61BB7-426B-448F-8A9C-66B993E7201A Figs 3, 4, Table 2

Chresonymy. *Megophrys* sp17., Chen et al. 2017.

Type material. *Holotype*: KIZ 053848, an adult male collected from Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Yingjiang County, Yunnan, China (24.563°N, 97.639°E; elevation 1478 m a.s.l.), collected by Zhong-Bin Yu, Dong An, Tian-En Chen, and Xian-Kun Huang on 12 August 2023.

Paratypes: KIZ 048503–KIZ 048505, three adult males, from Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Yingjiang County, Yunnan, China (24.546°N, 97.759°E; elevation 809 m a.s.l.), collected by Jin-Min Chen and Mian Hou on 11 August 2013; KIZ 053828, one adult male, collected at the same locality and with the same collection information as the holotype.

Etymology. The specific epithet "yingjiang" is a Latinized adjective derived from the name of Yingjiang County, Yunnan Province, China, where the new species occurs. We propose the English common name "Yingjiang horned toad" and the Chinese common name "Ying Jiāng Jiǎo Chán (盈江角蟾)".

Diagnosis. Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. differs from its congeners by a combination of the following morphological characters: (1) medium adult size, adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm (N=5); (2) head slightly longer than wide; (3) tympanum distinct, narrow anteriorly, slightly widening posteriorly; (4) pupil vertically elliptical; (5) vomerine ridges and vomerine teeth present; (6) tongue large, oval-shaped, feebly notched posteriorly; (7) relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III; (8) the heels slightly overlapping when the tibias are positioned at right angles to the body axis; (9) tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril; (10) lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow; (11) toes with rudimentary webbing; (12) inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate; (13) a distinct narrow '\/'-shaped parietoscapular ridge present; (14) flesh pink ventral surface of thighs.

Description of the holotype (measurements in Table 2). KIZ 053848, mature male, sized medium body (SVL 45.0 mm); head moderate (HDL/SVL 39.6%, HDW/SVL 38.9%), slightly longer than wide (HDW/HDL 98.3%); snout obtusely rounded in dorsal view, obtusely projecting beyond the lower jaw in profile, without rostral appendage; triangular in dorsal view; top of head flat; loreal



Figure 3. Views of the Holotype KIZ 053848 in life. **A.** Lateral view; **B.** Lateral view of head; **C.** Dorsal view of hindlimbs; **D.** Ventral view; **E.** Ventral view of hand, and **F.** Ventral view of foot. Photos by Zhong-Bin Yu.

region vertical and concave; canthus rostralis angular; eyes large (ED/HDL 31.5%); eye less than twice as long as maximum tympanum diameter (ED/TD 207.4%) and shorter than snout length (SNT 6.8 mm, ED/SNT 82.4%); tympanum distinct, circular in shape, relatively small (TD/HDL 15.2%), with upper border concealed by supratympanic ridge; eye-tympanum distance (TYE 3.3 mm) longer than tympanum diameter (TD 2.7 mm); nostril rounded, laterally positioned, nostril closer to the tip of snout than to the anterior corner of the eye (SN/DNE 81.6%); internarial distance greater than interorbital distance (IND/IOD 109.4%) and width of upper eyelid (IND/UEW 126.1%); pineal ocellus absent; vomerine teeth in two oblique series, positioned between choanae, separated from each other by distance equal to distance from choanae; maxillary teeth present; choanae oval; tongue large, oval-shaped, feebly notched posteriorly; single internal vocal sac, with a sac slit opening on floor of mouth at each corner; pupil vertically elliptical (Fig. 3B).

Forelimbs moderately long and thin; forearm not enlarged relative to the upper arm, its length shorter than the hand length (FAL/HL 86.4%); fingers long and narrow, lateral fringes on fingers absent, relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III; tips of all fingers rounded, slightly expanded relative to digit widths, with subcircular pads, terminal grooves absent; no webbing between fingers; subarticular tubercle absent; supernumerary tubercle absent; metacarpal tubercle absent (Fig. 3E).

Hindlimbs relatively long and thin, thigh length (THL 22.3 mm) shorter than the tibia length (TL 23.8 mm) but slightly longer than the foot length (FL 21.4 mm); the heels slightly overlapping when the tibias are positioned at right angles to the body axis; tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril; toes long and thin, relative toe lengths: I < II < V < III < IV; tips of all toes rounded, slightly dilated, terminal grooves absent; notably expanded relative to digit widths forming circular

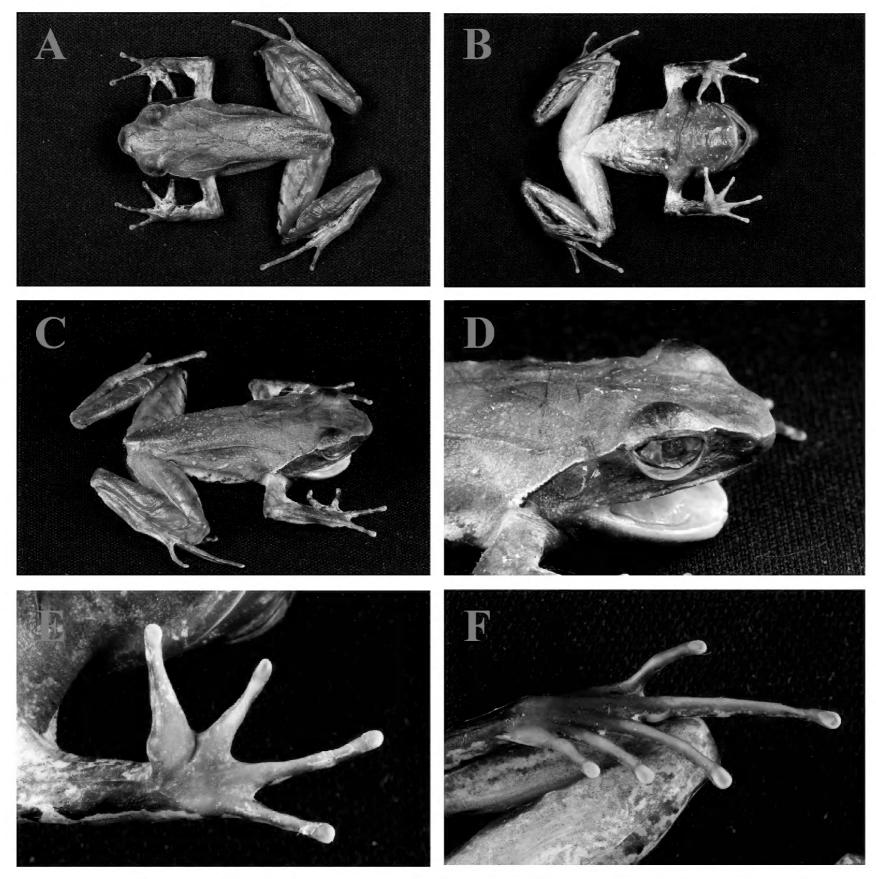


Figure 4. Views of the Holotype KIZ 053848 in preservative. **A.** Dorsal view; **B.** Ventral view; **C.** Lateral view; **D.** Lateral view of head; **E.** Ventral view of hand, and **F.** Ventral view of foot. Photos by Zhong-Bin Yu.

pads; lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow; toes with rudimentary webbing; tarsal fold absent; subarticular tubercle, supernumerary tubercle, and outer metatarsal tubercle absent; inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (Fig. 3F).

Skin of dorsal surfaces of head, body and limbs relatively smooth, with very small granules; posterior back densely-distributed with numerous small to medium sized granules and tubercles; flanks with small scattered tubercles (Fig. 3A); supratympanic fold distinct, narrow anteriorly, slightly widening posteriorly, extending from the posterior corner of the eye to a level above the insertion of the arm; tympanum skin smooth, tympanic rim slightly elevated relative to skin of temporal region (Fig. 3B); two opposing "V"-shaped parietoscapular ridge present on dorsum joined by a ca. 10 mm long dorsomedial fold in a hourglass-shape; dorsolateral fold absent; a distinct narrow '\/'-shaped parietoscapular ridge present, its two sides extending posteriorly from above tympanum, terminating beyond level of axilla; dorsal surface of thighs,

shanks and upper forearms with distinct transverse ridges (Fig. 3A, C); ventral surfaces of limbs, throat, chest, and abdomen smooth; pectoral glands small, rounded, slightly raised, closer to the axilla than to the mid-ventral line; femoral gland distinct, extend longitudinally, positioned equidistant from the knee and cloacal opening on rear of each thigh.

Coloration in life. For the coloration of the holotype in life, see Fig. 3. Dorsal surface reddish brown, with a complete inverted triangle bordered with a light edge present between eyes; lateral surface of trunk of body and anterior surface of the thighs near the groin pinkish; throat purplish grey with white flecking; chest and anterior half of abdomen purplish grey with yellowish flecking and greybrown blotches; posterior half of abdomen white with irregular lighter greyish blotches; ventral surface of thighs pinkish; ventral surface of feet and shanks brown-black; brown nuptial pads present on the base of first and second finger; supratympanic fold, light colored, bordered by a black lower margin; iris copper-brown, with tiny dark

Table 2. Measurements (in mm) of the type series of *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov. Bold font and an asterisk (*) indicate the holotype.

| | KIZ | KIZ | KIZ | KIZ | KIZ |
|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 053848* | 053828 | 048503 | 048504 | 048505 |
| Sex | ð | 8 | 3 | 8 | 8 |
| SVL | 45.0 | 49.8 | 46.8 | 44.6 | 47.9 |
| HDL | 17.8 | 17.6 | 17.9 | 18.4 | 18.2 |
| HDW | 17.5 | 17.5 | 16.4 | 17.3 | 17.4 |
| SNT | 6.8 | 7.0 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 7.1 |
| ED | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5.2 | 6.0 | 5.8 |
| IOD | 5.3 | 4.7 | 5.3 | 5.3 | 4.9 |
| UEW | 4.6 | 5.2 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 5.2 |
| IND | 5.8 | 6.1 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 5.8 |
| DNE | 3.8 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| SN | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.5 |
| TD | 2.7 | 3.2 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| TYE | 3.3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| FHL | 23.3 | 23.5 | 22.8 | 22.5 | 21.8 |
| FAL | 10.8 | 10.9 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 9.9 |
| HL | 12.5 | 12.6 | 12.8 | 12.5 | 12.0 |
| LAD | 4.3 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 4.1 | 3.9 |
| FLI | 5.9 | 6.1 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 4.1 |
| FLII | 4.5 | 5.0 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 3.8 |
| FLIII | 8.6 | 8.2 | 6.1 | 5.9 | 6.0 |
| FLIV | 5.2 | 5.4 | 4.6 | 4.6 | 4.0 |
| HLL | 75.9 | 80.4 | 76.0 | 78.7 | 72.6 |
| THL | 22.3 | 25.1 | 23.9 | 23.0 | 20.7 |
| TL | 23.8 | 24.8 | 24.0 | 25.7 | 24.0 |
| TAL | 32.7 | 34.3 | 12.3 | 12.9 | 12.9 |
| FL | 21.4 | 21.6 | 20.7 | 21.2 | 20.4 |

reticulations spreading from pupil; pectoral and femoral glands creamy white; inner metatarsal tubercle off-white.

Coloration in preservative. For coloration of the holotype in preservative, see Fig. 4. After eight months of storage in ethanol, dorsal and lateral surfaces of head and body fading to greyish-brown; slightly darker brown triangular marking between the eyes; two opposing "V"-shaped parietoscapular ridges present on two sides of dorsum becoming less distinct; the '\/'-shaped parietoscapular ridge present dorsum still clear; lateral surfaces of head below supratympanic ridges and canthus rostralis dark brown; supratympanic ridges whitish-cream; dorsal surfaces of forelimbs and hindlimbs primarily light greyish-brown; granules and tubercles on posterior half of back and flanks more distinct; throat and chest faded greyish-brown with several scattered white dots; ventral thighs and shank faded to pale yellow, with several dark brown blotches on the anterior thigh and shank; pectoral and femoral glands white; inner metatarsal tubercle still off-white.

Sexual dimorphism. All adult males with nuptial pads covering most of the dorsal surface of the bases of fingers I and II; male with single internal vocal sac (Fig. 5), with a sac slit opening on floor of mouth at each corner.

Distribution and ecology. *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov. is only known from the Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Tongbiguan Town, Yingjiang County, Yunnan, China, and Myitkyina, Myanmar (Fig. 1). All individuals were discovered in a mountainous area surrounded by shrubland at elevations of approximately 800–1200 m (Fig. 6). This species is in sympatric distribution with *X. periosa*, *X. dehongensis*, *X. glandulosa*,

and *Xenophrys* sp. of congeners. In addition, other frog species also found at the site include *Leptobrachella yingjingensis*, *Jingophrys feii*, and *Kurixalus yangi*.

Comparison. We compared *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov. with other congeneric species (Ohler et al. 2002; Stuart et al. 2006; Mahony 2011; Mahony et al. 2011; Mahony et al. 2013, 2018; 2020; Che et al. 2020; Luong et al. 2022; Lyu et al. 2023; Shu et al. 2023).

Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. is obviously different from its four most phylogenetically close congeners (X. dehongensis, X. auralensis, X. lekaguli, and X. takensis). It differs from X. dehongensis by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 34.8–36.7 mm, n = 5), metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. two metacarpal tubercles indistinct), tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril (vs. tibio-tarsal articulation reaching posterior corner of eye), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. II < I < IV < III); from X. auralensis by medium adult size, adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. large sized species, adult male SVL 71.0–76.9 mm, n = 9), head longer than wide (vs. head wider than long), internarial distance greater than interorbital distance and width of upper eyelid (vs. interorbital distance larger than internarial distance and width of upper eyelid), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. II < I < IV < III), transverse crossbar in hindlimbs absent (vs. forelimb, dorsal parts of thigh, tibia and foot greyish brown with darker brown bands); from X. lekaguli by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 55.6–66.6 mm, n = 8), head longer than wide (vs. head slightly wider than long), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. IV < II < III); tongue feebly notched posteriorly (vs. tongue unnotched), vertical bar below eye absent (vs. wide, dark vertical bar below eye), transverse crossbar in limbs absent (vs. limbs with narrow dark brown crossbars); from X. takensis by head longer than wide (vs head wider than long), tongue large, oval-shaped, feebly notched posteriorly (vs. tongue oval, not notched posteriorly), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. $IV \le II < I < III$ or IV = I < II < III), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent).

Xenophrys yingjiangensis sp. nov. is different from other congeneric species. The new species differs from X. ancrae by inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle very weak), pupil horizontally orientated (vs. pupil vertically elliptical), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. I < II < IV < III), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent); from X. awuh by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 35.7–41.1 mm, n = 4), nostril closer to the tip of snout than to the anterior corner of the eye (vs. nostril closer to eye than to snout), vomerine teeth present (vs. absent), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent); from X. damrei by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 57.1 mm, n = 1),head longer than wide (vs head wider than long), nostril



Figure 5. Advertisement calls for Paratype KIZ 048505. Photo by Jin-Min Chen.



Figure 6. Habitat of *Xenophrys yingjiangensis* sp. nov. at the type locality in Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, Yingjiang County, Yunnan, China. Photo by Zhong-Bin Yu.

closer to the tip of snout than to the anterior corner of the eye (vs. nostril closer to eye than snout), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), male with single internal vocal sac (vs. external vocal sac indistinct); from X. dz*ukou* by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 34.2-35.3 mm, n = 4), nostril closer to the tip of snout than to the anterior corner of the eye (vs. nostril closer to eye than snout), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. webbing absent); from X. flavipunctata by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 56.9–68.4 mm, n = 4), head longer than wide (vs head wider than long), tongue large, oval-shaped, feebly notched posteriorly (vs. tongue moderately large, deeply notched posteriorly), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), transverse crossbar in hindlimbs absent (vs. dorsal surfaces of hindlimbs with distinct mid brown transverse crossbars); from X. *himalayana* by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 68.0-73.5 mm, n = 6), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), outer metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. outer metacarpal tubercle weakly developed), transverse crossbar in hindlimbs absent (vs. dorsal surfaces of thighs and shanks with distinct dark brown transverse

crossbars); from X. megacephala by the heels slightly overlapping when the tibias positioned at right angles to the body axis (vs. not meeting), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), relative finger lengths: II < IV <I<III (vs. IV<II<I<III); dorsal surface of thighs, shanks and upper forearms with distinct transverse ridges (vs. absent), transverse crossbar in limbs absent (vs. dorsal surface of the fore and hind limbs with faint dark cross bars); from X. numhbumaeng by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5(vs. adult male SVL 33.8–34.6 mm, n = 2), pupil vertically elliptical (vs. pupil horizontally orientated), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle weak), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent); from X. oreocrypta by lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), pupil vertically elliptical (vs. pupil horizontally orientated), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle very weak), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. I < II < IV < III); from *X. oropedion* by adult male SVL 44.6– 49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 32.8–39.6 mm, n = 7), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct); from X. pangdaensis by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 17.9–22.2 mm, n = 6), tympanum distinct (vs. indistinct), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), transverse crossbar in limbs absent (vs. two dark transverse bands on each forearm, three dark transverse bands on anterior surface of thigh and shank), iris copper-brown (vs. iris orange-red); from X. periosa by medium adult size, adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. medium adult size, adult male SVL 71.3–93.8 mm, n = 12), outer metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. outer metacarpal tubercle weakly developed), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle weakly defined), iris copper-brown (vs. iris very dark orange), transverse crossbar in hindlimbs absent (vs. hindlimbs with distinct transverse crossbars); from X. truongsonensis by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 58.8-71.4 mm, n = 14), internarial distance greater than interorbital distance and width of upper eyelid (vs. internarial distance narrower than interorbital distance but wider than upper eyelid), external vocal sac indistinct (vs. absent), upper lip dark brown (vs. upper lip with a continuous white stripe, running from the nostril to shoulder), hindlimbs (vs. dorsal surface of fore and hind limbs reddish brown with dark crossbars); from X. lancangica by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 64.0-65.4 mm, n = 3), metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. two metacarpal tubercles indistinct), tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril (vs. tibiotarsal articulation reaching region between nostril and tip of snout), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), transverse crossbar in limbs absent (vs. dorsal limbs with transverse bands), relative finger lengths: II < IV

< I < III (vs. II < IV < I < III); from X. glandulosa by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 77.0-81.0 mm, n = 3), head longer than wide (vs head wider than long), tongue large, feebly notched posteriorly (vs. tongue distinctly notched posteriorly), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. moderately wide lateral fringes present on all toes), transverse crossbar in limbs absent in preservative (vs. dorsal surfaces of hindlimbs with distinct brown transverse crossbars in preservative), sides of head smooth (vs. sides of head finely granular); from X. monticola by vomerine teeth present (vs. vomerine teeth absent), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. absent), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), pupil vertically elliptical (vs. pupil horizontally orientated), tongue large, feebly notched posteriorly (vs. tongue large, appears rounded posteriorly without notch); from *X. robusta* by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 73.5-83.1mm, n = 6), head longer than wide (vs head wider than long), vomerine teeth present (vs. absent), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent); from X. medogensis by inner metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. distinct), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. absent), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. I < II < IV < III); dark brown stripe in lower margin of the supratympanic folds absent (vs. lower margin of the supratympanic folds with dark brown stripe); from X. *major* by medium adult size, adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. large sized species, adult male SVL 75.0–87.5 mm, n = 12), throat purplish grey with white flecking; chest and anterior half of abdomen purplish grey with yellowish flecking and grey-brown blotches (vs. light-edged wide dark brown stripe extending from posterior edge of mandible onto base of forearms), dorsolateral surface of forearms without blotch (vs. three dark brown blotches on dorsolateral surface of forearms); from *X. maosonensis* by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 66.2 mm, n= 1), metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. two metacarpal tubercles indistinct), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. I < II < IV < III), tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril (vs. tibio-tarsal articulation reaching center of eye), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct); from X. mangshanensis by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 60.4-71.6mm, n = 10), metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. two metacarpal tubercles indistinct), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. II < I < IV < IIII), tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril (vs. tibio-tarsal articulation reaching center of eye), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. absent), inner metatarsal tubercle large, elongate, ca. one and a half times longer than wide (vs. inner metatarsal tubercle indistinct); from X. zhangi by adult male SVL 44.6-49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 32.5–40.0 mm, n = 7), metacarpal tubercle absent (vs. two metacarpal tubercles indistinct), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. I < II < IV

< III), tibio-tarsal articulation of straightened limb reaching the nostril (vs. tibio-tarsal articulation reaching anterior corner of eye), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. absent); from X. zunhebotoensis by adult male SVL 44.6–49.8 mm, n = 5 (vs. adult male SVL 28.4–33.9 mm, n = 23), vomerine teeth present (vs. absent), lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), toes with rudimentary webbing (vs. absent), the heels slightly overlapping when the tibias positioned at right angles to the body axis (vs. meeting); absent (vs. dense orange speckling on chest and anterior abdomen); from X. serchhipii by lateral dermal fringes on toes distinct, narrow (vs. absent), relative finger lengths: II < IV < I < III (vs. IV < I = II < III), two opposing "V"-shaped parietoscapular ridge present on dorsum joined by a ca. 10 mm long dorsomedial fold in a hourglass-shape (vs. unconnected inverted "V"-shaped sacral ridge).

Discussion

Our study demonstrates that species diversity within the genus Xenophrys remains largely underestimated. Recent phylogenetic analysis has revealed multiple genetic lineages of *Xenophrys* that may represent new species (Chen et al. 2017). Among these, X. yingjiangensis sp. nov. was previously suggested to be a putative new species based on molecular phylogenetic analysis. In our present study, we combined morphological and molecular lines of evidence to confirm its species status and formally describe it. Our results bring the total number of *Xenophrys* to 29, and the number of *Xenophrys* known from China to 12. In addition to the new taxon described herein, the following species of Xenophrys are known from China: X. dehongensis, X. glandulosa, X. himalayana, X. lancangica, X. mangshanensis, X. maosonensis, X. medogensis, X. pangdaensis, X. parva, X. periosa, and X. zhangi (Frost 2024). Furthermore, our study also reveals a new distinct lineage from Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve that we consider a putative species. However, at present, we only have one subadult specimen. Further fieldwork is needed to collect more adult specimens and compare their morphological characteristics to determine their taxonomic status.

During our field work in the Tongbiguan Provincial Nature Reserve, adults and subadults of five species and putative species of *Xenophrys* (*X. dehongensis*, *X. glandulosa*, *X. periosa*, *X. yingjiangensis* sp. nov., and *X.* sp.) were found at the same site at the same time. A sympatric distribution pattern has been observed in other amphibians, such as *L. flaviglandulosa*, *L. nyx*, *L. feii*, and *L. bourreti*, in the Xiaoqiaogou Nature Reserve (Chen et al. 2020). However, research on the mechanism of sympatric distribution in amphibians is not well understood. Further evolutionary studies that integrate life history (e.g., advertisement call and breeding season) with genome data will be critical in the future to explore the mechanisms of sympatric coexistence among multiple lineages in *Xenophrys*.

The Gaoligong Mountains may harbor more hidden amphibian diversity than previously postulated. Recent

intensive surveys have significantly enhanced our understanding of the amphibian diversity of the Gaoligong Mountains, with discoveries of multiple new species, new national record species, and a series of new regional record species (e.g., Liu et al. 2021; Zhang et al. 2022; Hou et al. 2023; Wu et al. 2024, 2021). Our new findings of X. yingjiangensis sp. nov. and putative species further confirm that amphibian diversity in this mountain ecosystem is undoubtedly underestimated. Future amphibian exploration will hopefully continue to discover more new taxa in the region. In addition, the classification and diversity of some species distributed in the Gaoligong Mountains have long been disputed, such as *Amolops* bellulus (Liu et al. 2000; Wu et al. 2020) and Nanorana arnoldi (AmphibiaChina 2024). Considering that the Gaoligong mountains are located at the China-Myanmar border, future international collaborations between herpetologists from both countries are necessary to clarify the distribution and classification of these species.

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Supplementary material 1

Average uncorrected p-distances (percentage) among *Xenophrys* species calculated from 16S rRNA gene sequences (below the diagonal) and standard error estimates (above the diagonal)

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- Explanation note: The ingroup mean uncorrected p-distances are shown on the diagonal.
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